

The unpaid principal balance of an older section 202 loan would be converted to a capital advance, essentially forgiving outstanding debt. The project would then receive cost-effective operating assistance under a project rental assistance contract that is better designed to provide quality elderly housing in local markets.

In its simplest form, conversion is likely to have no financial impact on the projects, but the federal subsidy would be scored in the budget process in a different manner. By forgiving the direct loan, the need for section 8 subsidy is reduced by the amount of principal and interest. Thus, the forgiveness of outstanding section 202 loans would initially have a one-time mandatory budget cost. However, the up-front costs of conversion would, over time, be more than offset by ongoing discretionary savings and lasting benefits to HUD's budget, elderly housing sponsors, and elderly residents.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that Congress has a unique opportunity to address these issues because, unlike much of the rest of the section 8 inventory, the contract renewal problem does not become significant until after the year 2000. I urge all my colleagues to join me in sponsoring this legislation.

#### HONORING THE SESQUICENTENNIAL OF BRIDGEPORT TOWNSHIP

##### HON. DAVE CAMP

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, April 1, 1998*

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise today to recognize the Sesquicentennial of Bridgeport Township, Michigan. This community was founded on April 4, 1848 and is currently Michigan's oldest charter township. In April of 1848 Bridgeport Township's population was 15, today there are 9,158 residents. Although the township has grown, Bridgeport Township has worked hard to preserve and protect its rich history. Bridgeport Township's motto is "A Community Living and Growing Together." This is a fitting motto because time and time again the residents have worked together to improve their community. When the old school house was going to be torn down—the citizens of Bridgeport Township worked together to save the historic building. Today, it stands in the township's historic village and is used by classes each year. When they needed a Gazebo constructed in the historic village, they joined as a community to complete this important project. Today, the gazebo is used for musical events and other gatherings.

John Oldham said:

To live is to meet life eager and unafraid—to refuse none of its challenges, and to evade none of its responsibilities; but to go forth daily with an adventurous heart to encounter its risks, overcome its difficulties, and seize its opportunities with both hands.

This is how the community of Bridgeport Township has met each day during the past 150 years. It is through the dedication and hard work of many generations that this community gathers to celebrate 150 years of prosperity and very special memories.

On Saturday, as the citizens of Bridgeport Township reflect on their past—they can be

very proud of how their community started and where it is today. It is a special, caring community that has grown without sacrificing their special heritage.

#### MCCOLLUM V. BOARD OF EDUCATION: A MILESTONE FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

##### HON. JERROLD NADLER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, April 1, 1998*

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark the 50th anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision in the case of *McCullum versus Board of Education of School District No. 71*, in which the Court clearly expressed the importance of maintaining the separation of church and state. As the Congress considers a proposed constitutional amendment which threatens that important principle, I urge every member of this House to read the Court's decision. It clearly illustrates how the separation of church and state, enshrined in the First Amendment, protects the fundamental rights of free conscience and religious liberty.

The McCollum family had a son attending the fourth grade in a public school in Champaign, Illinois. The Champaign school district allowed a local private organization, the Champaign Council on Religious Education, to send religious teachers into the public school during regular school hours. Students were released from regular classes to attend private religious instruction in the public school building.

In theory, any remaining students were required to leave their classrooms and pursue their regular studies elsewhere in the school building. In practice, James McCollum was the only student in his class who did not attend the religious instruction. He was sent to the principal's office or made to sit at the detention desk for problem students out in the hall—as though he were being punished.

The family was also subject to ostracism. They became outcasts in Champaign, and the children, particularly James, were harassed. The family cat was killed, and once, on Halloween, the family answered the door to trick-or-treaters only to be pelted with garbage. The verbal abuse grew so great that when James got to junior high, he moved to Rochester, N.Y., to live with his grandmother and go to school there. According to James, now a retired attorney, his mother worked at the University of Illinois, but when it became known that she had brought this lawsuit, she was fired.

Unfortunately, this sort of situation is far from a thing of the past. Many of my colleagues may remember the testimony of Lisa Herdahl whose family challenged prayers and religious Bible instruction in the public schools in Pontotoc County, Mississippi. The Herdahl children were harassed at school and singled out by teachers and other students. The family was subject to community protests and hostile newspaper coverage. After school officials ignored the Herdahl family's requests to put an end to the coercive practices, People for the American Way Foundation and the ACLU of Mississippi filed suit in federal court, citing the McCollum case among others. Two years ago, a federal judge ruled against the school dis-

trict, and school officials decided not to appeal.

We are often urged to blur, or even eliminate, the line that has long separated church from state. But experience shows us that when we allow this to happen, the rights of individual Americans are trampled upon by the majority. The purpose of the "wall of separation" is not to protect government from religion, as it is often alleged, but to protect religion, and particularly the individual religious beliefs of all Americans from government.

When some in the community attempt to use the power of government, in these cases against children required by law to be present in school, to further their own sectarian goals, the hand of government will inevitably be coercive. If religious freedom is to have any meaning at all, if must be that no one should ever be allowed to use the power of government to coerce another citizen, especially a vulnerable and impressionable child, on matters of faith.

Justice Hugo Black wrote in his opinion in *McCullum*, "the First Amendment rests upon the premise that both religion and government can best work to achieve their lofty aims if each is left free from the other within its respective sphere." The hard and bitter experience of families, like the McCollum family fifty years ago, and the Herdahl family in this decade, is that the authors of the First Amendment were right to keep government away from religion, the Court was right in remaining true to the principle, and it would be a terrible mistake for Congress to ignore the lessons of history and wisdom of our Bill of Rights.

Justice Felix Frankfurter, put it well in the *McCullum* case, when he wrote, "The great American principle of eternal separation . . . is one of the vital reliances of our Constitutional system for assuring unities among our people stronger than our diversities." I hope the members of this Congress will defend our national unity, the rights of all Americans, and leave the First Amendment the way it is.

#### INTRODUCTION OF SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION BONDS LEGISLATION

##### HON. BOB ETHERIDGE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, April 1, 1998*

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to announce the introduction of my legislation to assist fast-growing states to build new schools, reduce class sizes and overcrowding and foster an orderly and disciplined learning environment. I urge my colleagues to join me in signing on to this important legislation.

As the former Superintendent of North Carolina's schools, I know firsthand how important quality facilities are to our children's education. The General Accounting Office has identified more than \$112 billion in school construction needs across the country. The Secretary of Education has reported that the "Baby Boom Echo" will create an explosion of growth in the school-age populations in many states over the next ten years. Congress must assist these states to meet their school construction needs of the coming decade.

My bill will create \$7.2 billion in school construction bonds over the next ten years. The school bonds will be allocated to the states based on the growth we know they will experience in the coming decade. The Etheridge bill